

To the Members of the California State Senate:

I am returning Senate Bill 161 without my signature.

While I have historically supported greater access to necessary pharmaceutical treatments and appreciate the author and sponsors' intent, I cannot support this particular measure. For those patients fortunate enough to have health coverage in today's economic environment, health plans already provide coverage for oral anticancer medications. This bill limits a plan's ability to control both the appropriateness of the care and the cost by requiring them to immediately cover every medication as soon as it receives federal approval regardless of the provisions of the health plan's formulary – placing them at a severe disadvantage when negotiating prices with drug manufacturers.

I do believe that oral anticancer medications can be more cost-effective and efficacious in some instances. If there is a way to provide greater access without increasing overall costs, I would be willing to reconsider such a measure next year. I would encourage a collaborative approach with my Administration, the health plans, and the pharmaceutical manufacturers next year on this topic.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger